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PRESS RELEASE

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State Recognizes September as Healthy Aging Month; Urges Seniors to Get Flu Shots

Getting a vaccination this month will protect through the entire flu season

SPRINGFIELD - September 14, 2012. Illinois Department on Aging Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., today reminded that September is Healthy Aging Month, an annual health observance that focuses attention on the positive aspects of growing older. The observance proves a good time for older adults to assess how they are doing and take preventive measures regarding their health.

September's Healthy Aging Month is also the kick off of preparing for the upcoming flu season. Seniors are at increased risk for the flu, especially those who have certain chronic health conditions. Seniors should make it a priority to get a flu vaccine.

"Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. As many of 49,000 Americans die each year from the flu, and about 90 percent of those deaths occur in people ages 65 years and older. You can get vaccinated in September and be protected through the entire flu season," said Director Holton.

The flu season usually runs from October through May. Public health officials strongly recommend getting vaccinated each year, because the flu season changes and effectiveness of the previous year's vaccination decreases. The flu vaccine is starting to arrive at local health departments across the state, as well as health clinics and pharmacies. The cost of vaccine may vary, but is covered by Medicare, Medicaid and by some insurance companies.

The flu, formally called influenza, is spread through coughing or sneezing. In addition to getting a flu shot to prevent getting the flu, people are also encouraged to use good sanitary measures, such as covering the mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, washing their hands and staying away from others when sick.

For more information about influenza, log onto the state public health department's website at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/flu/index.htm>. To find out where you can get a flu shot, go to <http://flushot.healthmap.org/>.

For more information about program services to assist older adults in Illinois and their caregivers, visit www.state.il.us/aging or call the Department on Aging Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327.

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